

AFRICA NEWS REPORT



AFRICA REGIONAL SERVICES - AMERICAN EMBASSY
58 BIS, RUE LA BOETIE , 75008 - PARIS - TEL: 01.43.12.48.61 - FAX: 01.43.12.46.57
(<http://usembassy.state.gov/paris-ars/wwwhpres.html>)

ENGLISH VERSION

ISSUE #828

March 1, 2004

CONTENTS

Page

Powell, Thompson Announce Release of Emergency AIDS Funds (\$350 million on its way to 14 AIDS-stricken nations) (2000)	1
U.S. AIDS Relief Plan Launched with Release of \$350 Million (14 nations to receive new support for treatment, care and prevention) (810)	2
U.N. AIDS Program Commends U.S. AIDS-Fighting Plan (UNAIDS pledges to work closely with U.S.) (490)	3
Resources -- and Leadership -- Needed to Stem AIDS Crisis in Africa (U.N.'s K.Y Amoako praises Bush's global AIDS agenda) (800)	4
U.S. Urges More International Support for AIDS Fight (EU leaders meet to draw disease strategy) (560)	4
CIA Expert Warns of Looming HIV/AIDS Threat in Africa, Asia (David Gordon bases dire predictions on "Next Wave" report) (1250)	5
West African Polio Campaign Inoculates 60 Million Children (U.N. health agency emphasizes progress, despite holdouts in Nigeria) (580)	6
U.S. Announces New Worldwide Landmine Policy (Assistant Secretary of State Bloomfield briefs February 27) (920)	7
A New U.S. Policy on Landmines (Op-ed by Special Representative for Mine Action Lincoln Bloomfield) (850)	7
U.S. Sends Emergency Supplies for Moroccan Earthquake Victims (USAID assesses additional needs for relief efforts) (340)	8

U.S. Official Cites Possible "Ethnic Cleansing" in Sudan	
(USAID's Roger Winter saw "war raging" in Darfur) (980)	9
U.S. Provides \$9.3 Million in Emergency Aid for Sudanese Refugees	
(February 23 State Department statement by Richard Boucher) (270)	10
Somalia: Private Enterprise Keeping the Country Going	
(Shinn cites services provided by business, need for stabilization) (830)	10
U.S. Deplores Violence in Gambella Region of Ethiopia	
(Calls for investigation into charges of attacks against civilians) (240)	11
Cape Town Student Astronaut's Essay Wins Mars Mission Assignment	
(Nomathemba Kontyo works at Jet Propulsion Lab in California) (820)	11

AEF102 02/23/2004

Powell, Thompson Announce Release of Emergency AIDS Funds

(\$350 million on its way to 14 AIDS-stricken nations) (2000)

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Health Tommy G. Thompson announced February 23 the release of first-year funding for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. They said the \$350 million is ready for distribution to 14 nations in Africa and the Caribbean, which account for 50 percent of all the world's 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS.

At the same Washington briefing, Global AIDS Coordinator Randall Tobias outlined the strategy which will guide distribution of the funds in order to send relief to suffering peoples as quickly as possible. He said the funds will be used for prevention, care and treatment programs.

"These funds will directly affect the lives of millions of people," said Thompson.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief was first outlined in the State of the Union message in January 2003. Congress has approved a \$15 billion, 5-year campaign that aspires to provide treatment to 2 million HIV-infected people, prevent 7 million new HIV infections, and provide care to 10 million people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, including children's whose families have been stricken by the disease.

Following is the transcript of remarks by Powell, Thompson and U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

February 23, 2004

REMARKS

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell

Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson

And U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios

On The Five-Year Strategy for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

February 23, 2004

Washington, D.C.

(12:15 p.m. EST)

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm very pleased to be joined today by Secretary of Health and Human Resources Tommy Thompson, my cabinet colleague, and I'm also joined by Andrew Natsios, the Administrator of USAID, and, of course, Randy Tobias, who is our Coordinator for our Global HIV/AIDS programs.

Eight thousand people will die today because of AIDS. It is a pandemic. When this Administration took office, the President committed to the American people and to the people of the world that we would do everything we could about it. He charged Secretary Thompson and me to work hard on it.

We formed a cabinet-level task force and we have done a great deal over the last several years. We helped Secretary General Annan when he set up the Health Fund, the Global Health Fund; and not too long ago, a year or so ago, the President made a very powerful statement to the world when he said that the United States would contribute \$15 billion over a five-year period to deal with this pandemic.

Much more has to be done, and I think the United States is showing bold leadership for the rest of the world on what we have to do.

Today we have asked you to come together because we have finished the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which is going up to Capitol Hill today. The Congress has approved the President's program and appropriated some money for that program, and we'll also be describing how the first \$350 billion will be -- excuse me, 350 -- I wish it was -- \$350 million will be used to get the program underway.

This is something we are all committed to, we are all solidly behind, and I'm going to ask Secretary Thompson to say a word or two; and then Administrator Natsios; and then turn it over to Ambassador Randy Tobias, our Global AIDS Coordinator, to give you the details of both the plan that's going up to the Hill and how the \$350 million is going to be used against what kinds of programs around the world and how it will support our overall effort; and then Ambassador Tobias will be prepared to take questions.

Let me, before turning it over to Tommy Thompson, though, thank Ambassador Tobias and his staff for the great work that they have done in pulling this plan together. And now let me turn it over to Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson.

SECRETARY THOMPSON: Thank you, Colin.

Thank you very much, Secretary Powell for your passion on this subject, and thank you for your introduction.

An old, Irish philosopher said that all deals are off until the money hits the table. Well, today, the money hits the table.

The \$350 million that we are releasing this morning is going to save the lives; it's going to relieve suffering in our 14 focus countries. I'd like to thank Secretary Powell for his leadership on this subject. I certainly want to thank my friend Ambassador Randall Tobias for his passion, his leadership and his willingness to serve, as well as his staff for their efforts to get this money turned around so quickly.

It's one thing to say we're going to do something. It's another thing to send the check. These funds will directly affect the lives of millions of people. I also want to thank him for his confidence in the Department of Health and Human Services, because we'll receive \$109 million of the dollars, plus an additional \$80 billion that we are contributing from our Department.

This Administration has made an unprecedented commitment to fight global AIDS. It's a commitment that is growing. No government has ever invested the time, the energy and the resources to fighting AIDS as the United States has under President George W. Bush.

An important part of that investment is going to go to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. I am proud to serve as Chairman of the Global Fund, and I am proud of the contributions the United States is making to that fund.

America has spent, requested or vowed to seek nearly \$2 billion to the Global Fund. That's more than a third of the \$5.3 billion pledged to the fund by all governments, organizations and individuals. We have recognized our serious responsibility as a nation.

And we're meeting that responsibility. To date, the fund has approved 224 grant programs in 121 countries, totaling more than \$2 billion. Our continued commitment to the Global Fund will equipment public-private partnerships, mobilize resources to fight the spread of diseases around the world.

So let's not lose sight of the bigger picture. The United States will provide unprecedented resources, but the crisis of global AIDS is so far and so vast, it's too great for any one country to solve.

President Bush and all of us here today continue to call on more countries to get involved with the global effort by

contributing more resources to the Global Fund. This is a commitment that the whole world must keep.

I have traveled to Africa twice in the past two years. The first time, I saw the damage with my own eyes. I saw the despair. In November, I returned as chairman of the Global Fund. Again, I saw the devastation, but this time, with Ambassador Tobias, we saw a great deal of optimism and hope.

The treatment and prevention programs that we're supporting under both the bilateral and the Global Fund are starting to work and are starting to show results. The money that we're releasing today holds the same promise, the same hope, the same optimism for the future.

Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you, Tommy.

Administrator Natsios.

ADMINISTRATOR NATSIOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. AID is part of the team that Ambassador Tobias has assembled to fight this terrible pandemic. We've been working in a very integrated way, not only in Washington, but, of course, in the field where our AID field missions have a large presence. We have several hundred people working on this in the targeted countries.

But there are two specific things I'd like to focus on this morning, and that is that we're integrating the programs that Ambassador Tobias are in charge of with our existing AID portfolio that is not part of the \$2.4 billion appropriation.

In other words, for example, we're taking our food aid programs in a number of the countries where there are rising rates of acute malnutrition, as a result of most of the able-bodied adults having either died or being very sick, so sick they cannot plant the crops and they can't harvest them; so we're seeing very high rates of malnutrition when there is no -- supposed to be any famine, there's no drought, there's no war going on. It is a function of the able-bodied adults not being able to farm.

And so we're integrating our food aid programs to reduce the malnutrition rates because we know there's a relationship between the onset of the disease and malnutrition.

The second thing is that we are using, at Ambassador Tobias's insistence, the existing infrastructure and networks that we have all over the developing world to move this money as fast as possible. If you set up new networks, it takes much longer to do that.

So we're using the existing religious institutions at the local level, the NGO communities, the missionary hospitals, the ministries of health and other mechanisms that already are in place in order to move this money as rapidly as possible.

But one example, last Friday, we provided four grants to faith-based NGOs, including Catholic Relief Services, World Relief, Habitat for Humanitarian Opportunities International, which have an excellent record of connections into the existing infrastructure within Africa, in particular.

In October, I was in Addis meeting with Prime Minister Meles about the near-famine conditions that existed last year, which we've overcome; but I took the opportunity to meet the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church -- 40 percent of Ethiopians are Orthodox. It's an ancient church. It goes back to the third century, but they have 200,000 priests at the local level.

We've been training them, using grant money, in understanding what the pandemic is about and providing literature through those churches to how the disease can be prevented from spreading.

I also met with the Imam, who's the head of all Muslims in Ethiopia -- 40 percent of Ethiopia is also Muslim. And we're

doing the same thing for 125,000 imams -- I'm sorry -- mullahs at the mosques in the villages.

With literature and training, we can use these existing infrastructures to change people's behavior so that the disease does not spread as rapidly. And so using these mechanisms, we will advance the objectives of President Bush and make this whole effort move more rapidly.

It is a great pleasure to be working with Randy Tobias, who is a man of great conviction and managerial competence and leadership ability; and our people are really pleased he's doing this, and we're working in a very integrated fashion with his staff.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you very much, Andrew. Tommy and Andrew, thank you for being here this morning. I'm going to turn it over to Ambassador Tobias now, but I hope you've seen from what we've said so far that this is an integrated effort. We're all working together, pulling the bilateral programs that had existed previously, the Global Health Fund programs that Secretary Thompson spoke about, with what Ambassador Tobias will now be doing with the new funds so that it is all integrated, and not just on HIV/AIDS, but as Andrew pointed out, integrated into feeding programs and other programs, all related to bringing help to those people greatest in need.

And now, it is my great pleasure to turn these proceedings over to Ambassador Randall Tobias and to thank him and his staff for the great work they have done in pulling this all together; and once again, thank Secretary Thompson and Andrew Natsios for all their great work in helping Ambassador Tobias.

Thank you very much.

Randy.

(Applause.)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF101 02/23/2004

U.S. AIDS Relief Plan Launched with Release of \$350 Million
(14 nations to receive new support for treatment, care and prevention) (810)

By Charlene Porter

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration started writing the checks February 23 to send \$350 million in new aid to 14 nations suffering the worst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Set in motion just one month after the U.S. Congress approved the funding, this distribution of aid is the first installment in the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief first announced by President Bush in January 2003, which will send a total of \$15 billion to hard hit nations over the next five years.

"Today the money hits the table," said U.S. Secretary of Health Tommy G. Thompson at a Washington briefing hosted by Secretary of State Colin Powell. "This administration has made an unprecedented commitment to fight global AIDS. ... No government has ever invested the time, the energy and the resources as the United States has under President George W. Bush."

U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Randall L. Tobias said the aid is being specifically targeted to countries where it is urgently needed for disease prevention, treatment and care.

"With just this first round of funds, an additional 50,000 people living with HIV/AIDS will begin to receive treatment, and that will nearly double the number of people currently receiving treatment in all of sub-Saharan Africa," said Tobias. At the same time, he said the money will be targeted to provide care for 60,000 children

orphaned by AIDS, and will allow the dissemination of disease prevention messages to an estimated 500,000 young people.

The release of this new assistance was but one milestone in the implementation of the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief which will send \$15 billion in assistance over five years. As required by law, Tobias and his staff sent Congress a 100-page report detailing the strategy for enacting this comprehensive effort. Tobias said one important element in the plan will be to direct the increased assistance to programs and organizations that can already point to a successful record of delivering services to people who need them.

"Our intent has been to move as quickly as possible in order to bring immediate relief to those suffering the devastation of AIDS. By initially concentrating on scaling up existing programs, that is exactly what we believe we are able to do," Tobias said.

The countries that will be receiving assistance are Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Collectively, these countries are home to about 50 percent of the world's 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS. In authorizing the plan, Congress also ordered that a 15th country, located in a region other than Africa or the Caribbean, be selected for inclusion in the program. Tobias anticipates that announcement will be made soon.

Those nations most severely hit by the pandemic are receiving targeted assistance through the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, but officials point out that the plan also includes a \$5 billion appropriation over its five-year implementation period for bilateral assistance to more than 100 other countries.

The strategic approach for maximizing effectiveness of the program also emphasizes the importance of integrating assistance from various sources, and is directed to different sectors in the receiving nations. U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Andrew Natsios, also participating in the February 23 briefing, pointed to his agency's longstanding food assistance programs as an example.

"We're seeing very high rates of malnutrition when there is not supposed to be any famine. ... There's no drought, there's no war going on. It's a function of the able-bodied folks not being able to farm," said Natsios. In response, USAID is integrating food programs with disease monitoring efforts in order to prevent malnutrition, which is known to speed up the severity of AIDS symptoms.

Officials also noted that the new strategy directs more than \$500 million to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a two-year-old international, independent granting agency, currently chaired by Secretary Thompson. The Global Fund approves grants after a thorough review of focused applications, and so far has funded 224 programs in 121 countries.

With these combined efforts, through international partnerships and bilateral aid, Secretary Powell said the United States has shown "bold leadership" on the issue, and he urged other nations to make similar contributions to improving global health. Powell also stressed how much needs to be done, offering the sobering statistic that an estimated 8,000 people die each day from AIDS.

Over the course of the five-year plan, the U.S. goal is to provide treatment to 2 million HIV-infected people, prevent 7 million new infections and provide care to 10 million people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, notably orphans and vulnerable children.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF202 02/24/2004

U.N. AIDS Program Commends U.S. AIDS-Fighting Plan (UNAIDS pledges to work closely with U.S.) (490)

The Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is applauding the United States announcement of a five-year strategic plan to attack the global epidemic and the release of \$350 million to support AIDS relief efforts.

After more than a year in the making, U.S. officials February 23 announced details of the \$15 billion plan which will target 14 nations suffering the worst epidemics as well as provide assistance for bilateral programs in more than 100 countries. A 15th nation is expected to be added soon to the list of targeted countries.

UNAIDS commended the effort in a statement issued from Washington, pledging its commitment to work with the Global AIDS Coordinator in the U.S. State Department. The Geneva-based agency says the U.S. plan for increased AIDS drug therapy is the first that approaches the problem on a "scale that contributes substantially to meeting the global need."

Following is the text of the UNAIDS statement:

JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAM ON HIV/AIDS

Press Statement

UNAIDS WELCOMES US PRESIDENT'S EMERGENCY PLAN FOR AIDS RELIEF FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

Washington, DC, 23 February 2004 -- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) applauds the United States government for developing a detailed five-year strategic plan to intensify U.S. action in the global battle against AIDS.

The U.S. government is to be commended for both seeking to enhance and coordinate its own AIDS efforts, and affirming that the AIDS fight can only be won through a concrete partnership between the international community, national governments, the private sector and people living with HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS stands ready to work with Randall L. Tobias, the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, and U.S. country teams to scale up the AIDS response on the ground in the 15 target countries worldwide.

The U.S. global AIDS initiative presents a historic opportunity to expand access to HIV treatment, prevention, and support services in developing countries. The funding announced today, totalling US\$350 million, is the first in a series of essential steps towards the U.S. government's five-year US\$15 billion plan for AIDS relief. At the upcoming G8 Summit this June, UNAIDS urges key donor nations to commit the urgently-needed resources to effectively fight AIDS worldwide - and we welcome the continued leadership of the U.S. in this effort.

While prevention remains a mainstay of the global response, the U.S. plan is the first ever by a donor government to lay out an ambitious strategy for providing antiretroviral therapy and care and support on a scale that contributes substantially to meeting the global need. UNAIDS looks forward to working closely with the U.S. government on implementation, including an even greater emphasis on women and girls and the strategies needed to address their vulnerability and their unequal access to services.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF203 02/24/2004

Resources -- and Leadership -- Needed to Stem AIDS Crisis in Africa

(U.N.'s K.Y. Amoako praises Bush's global AIDS agenda) (800)

By Bruce Greenberg

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- "The net effect of an AIDS-depleted society is a hollowing-out of state and social networks that ... has deep implications for the structure of families, communities and economies," warned K. Y. Amoako, chairman of the United Nations Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA).

Addressing a standing-room-only crowd of diplomats and Africa experts at the Ethiopian Embassy February 18 as part of the Ambassador Andrew Young Lecture Series on Africa, sponsored by the embassy and the Africa Society of the National Summit on Africa, Amoako praised the leaders of sub-Saharan Africa for combining their resources to tackle the continent's AIDS crisis, which is sapping the vitality of Africa on so many levels.

Amoako cited World Bank statistics that indicate that AIDS may be costing African nations up to 1.2 percent of their per capita growth each year. "And AIDS has increased the population living in poverty by up to 5 percent in a number of countries," he said. "It demands our urgent attention."

Amoako emphasized that in addition to lowering the incidence of Africa's HIV/AIDS infections, what is needed is an understanding of the structural dimensions of the disease and a realization that HIV/AIDS will persist as one of the most serious disease killers for the foreseeable future.

"What that requires on our part is investment," he said. "Not only foreign direct investment -- though that is certainly desired -- but also investment in our progress; investment in our concerted efforts to build capable states; investment in our struggle to ensure that aid is better spent and more wisely delivered; investment in our determination to manage and ultimately defeat HIV/AIDS; investment in our efforts to promote trade that is both fair and free; investment in our good governments; and, most importantly, investment in all of our people."

While calling on the international AIDS relief community to contribute its expertise and resources to the struggle, Amoako singled out the recent contributions of the Bush administration in the global AIDS fight. "Let me pause a moment to acknowledge the leadership shown on this issue by the current U.S. administration," he said.

"The commitment not only of generous funds but the real and urgent engagement by President Bush's Global Aids Coordinator Randall Tobias and his team is welcome. We urge them to sustain both their bilateral efforts and to adequately support multilateral initiatives such as the Global Fund. We also ask them to listen closely to what we in Africa say are our most pressing needs in the fight against the pandemic."

Because, he said, "there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to supporting Africa in its battle against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Through the African Union (AU), Africa's leaders are ... now taking charge of the fight against HIV/AIDS at the highest levels and giving this mission an important regional dimension."

"As some of you may know, the epidemic was prominent on the agenda at last year's AU Summit in Maputo, Mozambique -- the very first time that our heads of state had discussed the issue in this arena. But more attention needs to be paid by you to supporting actions to mitigate the structural impacts of HIV/AIDS," he said.

Acknowledging the split between "Afro-optimists" and "Afro-pessimists," those who overlook Africa's shortcomings as opposed to those who cynically view Africa as destined to live on in time as the world's basket case, Amoako declared himself an "Afro-realist" and pointed out the positives of the last decade.

"Africa has made significant gains over a short period of time," he said. "In real terms, Africa is creating a majority of capable states. Africa has not changed direction because donors demanded that we do so. Africa has changed direction because our people have demanded of our leaders that we do so -- and because we have more leaders today who, indeed, are leading."

"And Africa has changed because while we take credit for our achievements, we also soberly accept responsibility for the outstanding challenges we face. You, our friends and our African brothers and sisters abroad, need to help us consolidate these changes."

(K. Y. Amoako serves as the sixth executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), a post he has held since 1995. He also chairs the Commission on HIV/AIDS and Governance in Africa (CHGA), convened by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and including such international leaders as Dr. Peter Piot of UNAIDS; Richard Feachem, executive director of the Global Fund to Fight TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS; and Joy Phumaphi, assistant director-general of the World Health Organization.)

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF201 02/24/2004

U.S. Urges More International Support for AIDS Fight

(EU leaders meet to draw disease strategy) (560)

By Charlene Porter

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States is attempting to counter the global HIV/AIDS pandemic with initiatives to provide greater access to prevention, treatment and care for the estimated 40 million people living with the disease. As U.S. officials announced the release of first year funding for the \$15 billion, five-year plan, they also stressed to other governments the urgent need for additional resources.

In the first year alone, a U.S. commitment of \$350 million will help to double the number of Africans receiving treatment with AIDS drugs, officials said at a February 23 Washington briefing. Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke with pride about the program, but said it isn't enough. "Much more has to be done, and I think the United States is showing bold leadership for the rest of the world on what we have to do," he said.

Powell and other top officials who unveiled the launch of the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief said the United States has contributed more to fight global HIV/AIDS than any other single nation. At the same time, Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson said the magnitude of this health crisis is unlike anything ever seen before.

"So let's not lose sight of the bigger picture," said Thompson. "The United States will provide unprecedented resources, but the crisis of global AIDS is so far and so vast, it's too great for any one country to solve."

"President Bush and all of us here today continue to call on more countries to get involved with the global effort by contributing more resources to the Global Fund. This is a commitment that the whole world must keep," Thompson said.

One of the most prominent figures in the international fight against HIV/AIDS was delivering a similar message on another continent. Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, said the U.S. announcement demonstrated a growing momentum of funding from international public and private donors. As he spoke to a European Union ministerial meeting in Dublin, called expressly to examine the AIDS issue, Piot urged his audience to join that momentum.

"In general, there is a crying lack of leadership on this issue at all levels," he said in detailing the challenges that face Europeans in their efforts to confront the epidemic. "Unlike on other continents, there are very few high-level, multi-sectoral councils leading the response to AIDS."

The EU conference was held February 23-24 against an ominous backdrop. A report issued by the U.N. Development Program earlier in February found that nations of Eastern Europe and Central Asia are experiencing the fastest-growing HIV infection rates of any nations in the world, even though the actual numbers of people living with the disease still remain low compared to the worst-suffering nations in sub-Saharan Africa. Unless the trend is contained and reversed, the UNDP report warned, these nations are likely to experience economic declines. The EU ministerial meeting ended February 24 with adoption of the Dublin Declaration, in which the 55 participating states agreed on measures to step up their responses to the disease. According to EU documents, the Dublin Declaration establishes "a strategy, time frame and benchmarks" or fighting HIV/AIDS.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF104 02/23/2004

CIA Expert Warns of Looming HIV/AIDS Threat in Africa, Asia

(David Gordon bases dire predictions on "Next Wave" report) (1250)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- In some parts of Africa the killer HIV/AIDS infection is spreading like wildfire, threatening to overwhelm social, economic, political and security structures -- and Africa is not alone in trying to deal with these problems, says David Gordon, the author of a recently declassified U.S. government report on the pandemic that has killed 28 million people around the world since 1981.

Speaking February 5 on "The Global Pandemic: AIDS in Africa, China, and Russia" at an event sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), Gordon said "the looming growth of HIV/AIDS [infection] rates" in Africa is alarming, but he warned that the disease could "spread dramatically from its base in Africa" to other regions like Russia and India, leading to as many as 50 million deaths by 2010.

[Of the 42 million people currently infected with HIV/AIDS, about 70 percent live in Africa.]

"We have a very large problem and the problem is getting worse," Gordon told his audience, which included Ambassador Randall Tobias, the U.S. government's coordinator of all HIV/AIDS assistance programs overseas, an effort toward which President Bush has pledged more than \$15 billion. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson also spoke at the event.

Thompson, who made an AIDS fact-finding trip to four African nations in early December, said "the Bush administration has made an unprecedented and growing commitment to fighting the disease at home and abroad. On Monday (February 2), the president requested almost \$20 billion to address HIV and AIDS in 2005, a 28 percent increase over 2001," he noted. "No government," he said, "has ever committed the time, energy and resources to fighting AIDS" that the United States has.

Gordon, who is director of the Office of Transnational Issues at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), based his facts on an Intelligence Community Assessment (ICA) highlighting the "rising problem" of AIDS through 2010 in what he said were five countries of strategic importance to the United States. The former senior staff member on the House International Relations Committee was instrumental in preparing the report called: "The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India and China," which he said was read by President Bush as well as other top government officials and lawmakers before being declassified last year.

The report, meant to complement a 1999 HIV/AIDS assessment written under the aegis of the National Intelligence Council (NIC, a think tank within the CIA), was reviewed by a body of experts that included Dr. Anthony Fauci, a renowned HIV/AIDS researcher at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Nicholas Eberstadt, an AEI fellow and expert on health and economic matters. Eberstadt also joined Gordon at the AEI discussion.

By 2010, the report projects Nigeria will have 10 to 15 million AIDS cases; Ethiopia 7 to 10 million; China 10 to 15 million; India 20 to 25 million; and Russia 5 to 8 million.

"Nigeria and Ethiopia will be the hardest hit," the report states, "with the social and economic impact similar to that in the hardest hit countries in southern and central Africa -- decimating key government and business elites, undermining growth and discouraging foreign investment. Both countries are key to regional stability, and the rise in HIV/AIDS will strain their governments." Such effects could pose a serious security threat on a continent that some U.S. officials have said has become a breeding ground for international terrorism.

As for treatment, the report notes, "the cost of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) -- which can prolong the lives of infected people -- has plunged in recent years but still may be prohibitively high for populous, low-income countries. More importantly, the drug costs are only a portion of HIV/AIDS treatment costs. Drug-resistant strains are likely to spread because of the inconsistent use of ARV therapies and the manufacture overseas of unregulated, substandard drugs."

With an average health budget of only about \$10 per person per year in Africa, currently only between 75,000 and 100,000 people out of an infected population of over 20 million are being treated with ARVs on the continent, said Roger Bate, an AEI fellow and international health expert who joined in the AIDS discussion. AEI's Eberstadt further added that, compared to the United States, where "\$40 billion a year is spent on pets' [animals] healthcare," Africans -- excluding South Africa -- spend only about \$4 billion a year on health care for humans.

The pandemic has gained ground in Ethiopia, the report notes, due in part to "the generally poor health of Ethiopians as a result of drought, malnutrition, limited health care, and other infectious diseases, which has caused HIV to progress rapidly to AIDS."

On a less bleak note, the "Next Wave" report also mentions: "Through 2010, HIV/AIDS will increase more slowly or

even decline in southern and central Africa, where it has been devastating the populations of Botswana, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe." In addition, it says "the governments of Nigeria, India and China are beginning to focus more attention on the HIV/AIDS threat." And as the case of Uganda has shown, it says, a top down approach toward AIDS education and prevention can slow the disease.

"In Nigeria President [Olusegun] Obasanjo has spoken up more frequently about the threat of HIV/AIDS," Gordon said. "There is a civil society movement taking hold in Nigeria." On the other hand, the expert said, "I'm troubled by the difficulty Nigeria is having facing other health challenges [like polio eradication] ... for political reasons."

The AIDS threat and its repercussions are also being felt elsewhere in the world. In China, where an estimated 3 million people are infected by AIDS -- a number that could grow to 15 million by 2010 -- senior officials are now bringing much-needed attention to the growing crisis.

"The Chinese president has publicly acknowledged the AIDS challenge facing the country," said the CIA expert, "and met an infected person on television recently. Clearly there is recognition of the problem. Whether China will be able to grapple with this will depend on whether it will allow the openness and accountability that has so far been so dramatically lacking in their political system."

In Russia, Gordon said, official government reaction to the spread of HIV/AIDS has been far "slower than we anticipated." According to the "Next Wave" report, the number of people infected with AIDS could grow from about 3 million in 2002 to 8 million in 2010. "President Putin hardly ever mentions HIV/AIDS. He has been satisfied to leave the issue in the hands of a deputy health minister, and not much is happening in Russia to establish any kind of a national priority" to fight the disease, he said.

While the report projects India with 20 to 25 million AIDS cases by 2010 -- the highest projection for any other country, Gordon said that was offset by the country's advanced medical establishment. "If you look at what has happened on the ground in India, there has been a very significant ramping up of AIDS programs," he said. "The good news is that of the five countries mentioned in 'Next Wave' report, [India] is the best positioned in terms of health infrastructure to make an effective response to the disease and there is some good evidence that is happening."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF503 02/27/2004

West African Polio Campaign Inoculates 60 Million Children (U.N. health agency emphasizes progress, despite holdouts in Nigeria) (580)

By Charlene Porter

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington --The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that participation in a massive polio immunization campaign in West Africa has been "strong," despite the refusal by two northern Nigerian states to allow inoculations.

WHO spokesperson Melissa Corkum said February 27 that final data won't be available for several more weeks, but she anticipates that the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) has come close to achieving its goal of immunizing 63 million children in 10 West African states during the campaign conducted February 23-27.

"There is good news," Corkum said in a Washington File interview. "Thirty five of thirty seven (Nigerian) states did go ahead with the campaign," allowing infants and young children to receive vaccine to prevent the crippling viral disease.

According to press reports, Islamic leaders in Nigeria's Kano and Zamfara states have voiced concerns about the safety of the vaccine, alleging that it can cause infertility and HIV/AIDS. The vaccine has been used widely throughout the world, and WHO is certain of its safety. Still, Corkum said further safety tests are being conducted on the vaccine currently to allay those concerns with the hope that the hesitant states will participate in another West African immunization campaign set for late March.

As National Immunization Days unfolded this week, a case of paralytic polio was confirmed in Ivory Coast, more than three years after that West African nation was believed to be free of the disease. WHO is investigating whether the recently reported case is linked to viruses that spread out of Nigeria in 2003 after local authorities suspended immunization campaigns.

Polio has resurfaced in seven nations in west and central Africa previously declared polio-free. In a February 20 statement, WHO officials said the Nigerian refusal to participate in widespread immunization programs was the cause of the virus' resurgence in neighboring nations.

The GPEI is a joint effort of WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the public service organization Rotary International.

UNICEF Director Carol Bellamy dismissed the Nigerian suspicions about the vaccine in a February 25 statement. "It is unforgivable to allow still more children to be paralyzed because of further delay and baseless rumors," said Bellamy in a statement issued from UNICEF's Geneva headquarters. "We call on these authorities to immediately rejoin the polio eradication effort, which promises to be one of Africa's greatest success stories in public health. Nigerian leaders must take this opportunity now, or answer to their children." GPEI has been under way since the late 1980s and aspires to rid the world of the polio virus by 2005. When the initiative was started, an estimated 350,000 cases occurred annually. In 2003, fewer than 750 cases of the disease were detected worldwide, according to WHO data, and the virus was considered endemic -- that is, naturally prevalent in a particular area -- in only six nations. Because of the highly infectious nature of the polio virus, GPEI officials have long said that polio must be eradicated everywhere, by all nations, if it is to be eradicated at all.

Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan are the six remaining countries with endemic virus. Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Togo are the eight nations where the disease has reemerged. With 23 cases, Chad has experienced the largest outbreak.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF501 02/27/2004

U.S. Announces New Worldwide Landmine Policy

(Assistant Secretary of State Bloomfield briefs February 27) (920)

By David Anthony Denny

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- In a sweeping policy change, the United States will accelerate its efforts to end the global humanitarian problem of landmines by eliminating all of its non-self destructing landmines and by increasing funding for mine action programs worldwide, a State Department official says.

Lincoln Bloomfield, assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs and the special representative of the president and secretary of state for mine action, told reporters February 27 that the new policy "serves two important goals: a strong push to end the humanitarian risks posed by landmines, and ensuring that our military has the defensive capabilities it needs to protect our own and friendly forces on the battlefield."

The new policy, Bloomfield said, has several components: -- After 2010 the United States will use neither long-lasting or "persistent" anti-personnel nor persistent anti-vehicle landmines;

-- Within one year the United States will no longer have any undetectable landmines in its inventory;

-- The United States will push to develop alternatives within the decade to its current persistent anti-personnel and anti-vehicle landmines, incorporating enhanced self-destructing, self-deactivating technologies and control mechanisms;

-- The administration is asking Congress to increase the budget for global humanitarian mine actions programs in the 2005 budget to \$70 million; and

-- The administration will lead an international effort to conclude a worldwide ban on the sale or export of all persistent mines with minor exceptions for training purposes.

Following a long review, the Bush administration arrived at its position, Bloomfield said, drawing on 16 years of U.S. experience assisting mine-affected countries around the world. He pointed out that the United States is already "the world's largest contributor to humanitarian mine action," he said, having spent nearly \$800 million in 46 countries in the past 10 years for landmine clearance, mine risk education and survivor assistance.

Bloomfield pointed out that there have been at least 300,000 innocent victims of landmines, with some 10,000 more added annually. An estimated 60 million landmines remain deployed in 60 countries around the world, he added.

The new policy, Bloomfield said, is focused on persistent landmines -- those that remain active for years or decades until something or someone sets them off -- almost always with tragic results.

"What we have seen, very simply, is that the landmines harming innocent men, women and children, and their livestock, are persistent landmines," he said. "Nor are these lingering hazards caused solely by the anti-personnel category of persistent landmines. We find that persistent anti-vehicle landmines are left behind following conflicts, posing deadly risks to innocent people and requiring remediation by ourselves and the many other parties engaged in humanitarian mine action."

Bloomfield said the deployed persistent mines causing the annual toll of deaths and injuries "are not mines left behind by U.S. forces, the only potential exception being U.S. mines left behind during the Vietnam conflict more than three decades ago. ... The U.S. military already follows the strictures of the Amended Mines Protocol and the Convention on Conventional Weapons, which specifies obligations to mark, monitor and clear persistent minefields after hostilities end."

While the new policy emphasizes doing away with persistent landmines, it conversely emphasizes the use of non-persistent landmines. "These munitions have reliable features that limit the life of the munition to a matter of hours or a few days, by which time it self-destructs," Bloomfield said. "And in the unlikely event the self-destruct features fail, the battery will run out within 90 days, rendering it inert, and these batteries always expire," he said.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations Joseph Collins, who briefed with Bloomfield, provided the rationale for retaining and deploying landmines.

"It is the considered judgment of our senior military commanders," Collins said, "that they need the defensive capabilities that landmines can provide. The capabilities enable a commander to shape the battlefield to his or her advantage. They deny the enemy freedom to maneuver his forces. They enhance the effectiveness of other weapons systems, such as small arms, artillery or combat aircraft."

Landmines, Collins continued, "act as force multipliers, allowing us to fight and win with ... fewer forces ... against numerically superior opponents; and they also protect our forces, saving the lives of our men and women in uniform. At present, no other weapon system exists that provides all of these capabilities."

Bloomfield also addressed the issue of the 1997 Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines. Continuing the policy of the previous administration, he said the United States "will not become a party to the Ottawa Treaty."

"The Ottawa Convention offers no protection for innocent civilians in post-conflict areas from the harm caused by persistent anti-vehicle landmines, and it would take away a needed means of protection from our men and women in uniform who may be operating in harm's way," Bloomfield said.

There are two types of landmines: anti-personnel and anti-vehicle. But both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines can be divided further into persistent and non-persistent. The Ottawa Convention, in banning all anti-personnel landmines, fails completely to address the great problem of anti-vehicle landmines, while unnecessarily prohibiting the use of non-persistent anti-personnel landmines. Bloomfield said the United States will continue to work internationally through the "Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to ... end the ... indiscriminate use of all landmines."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF502 02/27/2004

A New U.S. Policy on Landmines

(Op-ed by Special Representative for Mine Action Lincoln Bloomfield) (850)

(This op-ed column by Lincoln Bloomfield, who is special representative of the president and secretary of state for mine action and assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, was published in the Financial Times February 27 and is in the public domain. No republication restrictions.)

(begin byliner)

America's Promise On Landmines

By Lincoln Bloomfield

The Bush administration will today announce a new policy on landmines that lie on or beneath the ground, ready to explode, long after cessation of the hostilities that prompted their use.

Indiscriminate use of persistent landmines by undisciplined armies, irresponsible governments and non-state actors has maimed tens of thousands of children and created widespread problems across the globe that have reached crisis proportions in several nations within the last decade. The US shares common cause with all who wish to undo this harmful legacy of conflict.

US military forces currently have persistent anti-personnel and anti-tank mines in their inventory. Under the new policy, after 2010, the US will no longer use persistent landmines of any type, on any battlefield, for any purpose, anywhere in the world. Between now and then, use of persistent landmines will require presidential authorisation.

After 2010, any landmines used by US forces will be rendered inert after a determined time period, measured in hours or days, not years or decades. The technology to do this exists now and has been proved, with no failures in more than 60,000 tests. The explosive power of our mines - anti-personnel and anti-vehicle - will be confined to the duration of hostilities.

Under this new policy, within a year the US will discontinue forever the use of any mines that are non-detectable to conventional metal detectors. Again, the US is the first major military power to make such a complete and unconditional commitment, one that covers all types of landmine.

Additionally, President George W. Bush has directed a 50 per cent increase in the Department of State's 2005 humanitarian mine action budget over baseline levels of fiscal year 2003, for a new total of \$70m per year, nearly twice that of the next largest donor.

This is a bold and sensible policy, one that breaks with formulations of the past. No other country has adopted a policy that can meet these standards of eschewing persistent landmines of all kinds, assuring detectability of any landmines used and strongly supporting humanitarian mine action programmes worldwide.

The "Ottawa Convention", to which the US is not a signatory, prohibits the use of anti-personnel landmines, but is silent on the entire class of more powerful anti-vehicle landmines. The fact that the US and the Ottawa Convention's drafters could not agree on terms in 1997 obscured the fact that we share a common commitment to end the harmful effects of landmines.

Nevertheless, many will ask how the new US policy differs from the Ottawa Convention. The convention's ban on all anti-personnel landmines would have denied our military the needed capabilities currently provided by mines that leave no enduring hazard on the battlefield. The president's new policy will end the use of landmines that are persistent, non-metallic, or both, while the Ottawa Convention permits landmines that are powerful enough to destroy a vehicle, including persistent and undetectable versions and those with "anti-handling devices" that can be triggered by people.

By ending the use of both persistent anti-vehicle and persistent anti-personnel mines, the US becomes the first big military power to take such comprehensive measures to protect civilians from post-conflict hazards, beyond protections afforded under any treaty.

Policy approaches may differ, and deserve to be discussed, but the people and communities victimised by deadly mines left behind after conflict deserve the full co-operation of all who support mine action.

No country does more than the US to support humanitarian mine action, including landmine clearance, mine risk education and victim assistance.

The US funded the first demining operations in Afghanistan in 1988 and has since been the world's largest donor,

providing almost \$800m to clear mines and help civilians in 46 countries or territories.

The programmes being increased under the new policy promote stability by allowing refugees to return home and giving communities a chance to rebuild their economies.

This new policy responds with vision to the problem of persistent landmines, avoiding recriminations over past policy disputes, demonstrating America's humanitarian commitment and all the while preserving needed military capability. We welcome other countries that may share this vision by curtailing their trade in and use of all persistent mines. Above all, we look forward to redoubling efforts with the international community, including governments, international and non-governmental organisations and the private sector, to end the humanitarian crisis caused by these weapons once and for all and to ensure that all people may walk the earth in safety.

(Lincoln Bloomfield is Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Mine Action and Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs.)

(end byliner)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF303 02/25/2004

U.S. Sends Emergency Supplies for Moroccan Earthquake Victims

(USAID assesses additional needs for relief efforts) (340)

The United States is sending blankets, tents, water purification units, hygiene kits and generators to Morocco to assist victims of the February 24 earthquake that devastated numerous villages in the northern part of the country around the coastal city of Al-Hoceima.

State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher issued a statement on February 25 saying the first planeload of emergency relief for the Moroccan people would be arriving that day.

He also noted that the U.S. Agency for International Development is conducting a needs assessment to determine what additional assistance would be appropriate.

According to reports from the Associated Press, the 6.5-magnitude temblor is blamed for more than 560 deaths in the region where the Rif Mountains meet the Mediterranean Sea. This figure may rise as emergency crews are able to reach more remote villages to assess and report the devastation.

Following is the text of Boucher's statement:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

February 25, 2004

Statement by Richard Boucher, Spokesman

United States Aids Victims of Moroccan Earthquake

The United States is providing immediate relief for the victims of the February 24 earthquake in Morocco. We are sending supplies to Morocco on an urgent basis from our warehouses in Italy and elsewhere, including 10,000 blankets, tents, water pumping and purification units, water containers, hygiene kits and generators, and other emergency items. The first planeload of emergency relief for the people of Morocco will arrive today, February 25.

This assistance is in addition to the \$50,000 contribution to the Moroccan Red Crescent provided the day of the earthquake to respond to the immediate needs of the Moroccan people. USAID is currently conducting a needs assessment to determine what other support the United States might be able to offer.

The United States stands with the people of Morocco at

this difficult time, and once again offers its condolences to the victims of this tragic event.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF401 02/26/2004

U.S. Official Cites Possible "Ethnic Cleansing" in Sudan

(USAID's Roger Winter saw "war raging" in Darfur) (980)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Villages are burning and close to a million people are being displaced in the western Darfur region of Sudan in what a top U.S. government official says may be a case of "ethnic cleansing."

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Roger Winter told journalists February 26, "The question arises: Is this an ethnic cleansing in motion that is taking place there [Darfur]? I don't have the answer for that -- I'm not a human rights lawyer, [but] it sure looks like that."

He said there is a "new rebellion" taking place in Sudan that has already displaced three-quarters of the 3 million population of Darfur and threatened a fragile peace process under way between the Government of Khartoum and rebels.

"Despite the comments of President Bashir and the [Khartoum] government generally, the war is still raging there [in Darfur]," Winter said. "And it is still the case that government-connected militias are attacking the African populations of the Darfur area. So, in some senses of the word, we see the same Arab-African conflict that we've seen in other parts of Sudan."

The worst part, Winter said, is that the renewed conflict in the three provinces making up Darfur has kept much needed humanitarian food deliveries from reaching the region, which could have far-reaching consequences for the health of people already weakened by decades of conflict.

Returning from a recent trip to Sudan that included a fact-finding visit to Darfur, Winter said: "We have made a tremendous amount of progress and are probably 85 or 90 percent of the way through the peace process as it relates to the war in the south. Therefore, it's very disheartening to have this massive new ... conflict break out in the western [Darfur] part of Sudan."

Winter served as executive director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees from 1981 to 2001 and is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on refugee crises. "Arguably, [Darfur] is the major humanitarian crisis in the world today," he said. "Since November the [Khartoum] government has not allowed humanitarian access to the war-affected population" and very little food and medicine has made it in to the besieged public. "No IDP [internally displaced persons] camp we visited had received any food deliveries," the official added.

After speaking with refugees in Darfur, Winter said, he found that what is essentially happening is that people are being driven off their land by men on camels and horseback who ride into their villages shooting and chasing them into the bush. "When we asked the people, 'Who attacked you?' they said they were popular defense forces and other government-connected militias. If you asked them, 'Were there any rebels present?' they uniformly said no."

What feeds into the ethnic cleansing scenario is the fact that the Khartoum government does not seem to be interested in

protecting the Darfur people against the raids, Winter said. "To the best of our ability to ascertain information, it seems that no real steps are being taken by the [Khartoum] government to stop the uprooting and attacking of these civilian populations."

Winter said USAID was attempting "to undertake to convene in the region the rebels and the government." He added, "I've spoken to five of the key opposition [rebel] leaders from Darfur, including those who have taken up arms against the government ... to ascertain if they would attend" a conference aiming at a cease-fire. "They all say yes. We have asked the government over the last two weeks if they would participate in such an event -- as of now we have no affirmative answer that they would participate."

So "we have no solution. We have an American initiative, but we don't have a solution that can actually bring the two parties together to negotiate a cease-fire that will permit us humanitarian access" to Darfur, Winter declared.

Asked if he really believed ethnic cleansing was taking place in Darfur, Winter said: "It is Arab populations that are doing the displacement and uniformly African populations that are being displaced. There is a problem of competition for resources between Arab nomads who need pasture for their flocks and African farmers that could be fueling the problem. 'I don't know if that [confrontation] legally fits the definition [of ethnic cleansing].'"

Winter explained, "These villages [in Darfur] are being burned intentionally." However, the raiders "are not massacring all the population. Some of the population are killed, people are displaced, they move, but there doesn't seem to be an attempt to eliminate them lock, stock and barrel as was the case in Rwanda in 1994, which was clearly genocide in its purest form."

On the other hand, Winter said, "it does seem to me what is happening here [Darfur] may fit the other model, which is the clearance of the population from an area for a possible use of that area by the people who are clearing it. That sounds a lot like ethnic cleansing if people are of a particular group. So, [in Darfur] I would say it sure looks like it to me, but I'm not the one who can make that judgment in a legal context."

(According to the just-released State Department Human Rights Country Report on Sudan, Sudanese government and government-supported militias "committed serious abuses in response to rebel attacks in the Darfur region during the year, including razing numerous villages. As a result, as many as 3,000 unarmed civilians were killed, more than 600,000 civilians were internally displaced, and an estimated 100,000 refugees fled to neighboring Chad by year's end.")

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF105 02/23/2004

U.S. Provides \$9.3 Million in Emergency Aid for Sudanese Refugees

(February 23 State Department statement by Richard Boucher) (270)

The United States is providing \$9.3 million in emergency assistance to aid 110,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad who have fled fighting in the Darfur region of western Sudan, State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher announced February 23.

Following is the text of Boucher's statement:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesman

February 23, 2004

STATEMENT BY RICHARD BOUCHER, SPOKESMAN

United States Assistance to Sudanese Refugee Emergency

The United States is providing \$9.3 million in emergency assistance to address the dire humanitarian needs of 110,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad. This assistance is part of an allocation announced by the President on February 5, 2004, from the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund. It includes \$5,000,000 for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, \$1,000,000 for the World Food Program, and \$400,000 for the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The balance of \$2.9 million will be allocated shortly.

Appeals have been sent out by international organizations for contributions to address the needs of refugees who have fled fighting in the Darfur region of western Sudan. The United States encourages other donors to respond quickly. The needs are urgent.

We note that the Government of Sudan has declared that humanitarian access will be ensured for relief agencies seeking to respond to the needs of the victims of fighting inside Darfur region. We urge all parties to the conflict to make that humanitarian access a reality.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF301 02/25/2004

Somalia: Private Enterprise Keeping the Country Going

(Shinn cites services provided by business, need for stabilization) (830)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- How will the international community characterize a country that has all the services that central and local governments routinely provide, support or regulate -- security, courts and prisons, schools, health, roads, telecommunications, foreign policy, etc. -- but lacks a functioning national government?

This was one of the underlying questions posed by retired U.S. Ambassador David Shinn in a panel discussion on "Somalis and Their Future" sponsored by the Institute of International Humanitarian Affairs at Fordham University in New York City on February 23. Former Somalia Prime Minister Abdirazak Haji Hussein also attended the event.

He also questioned whether a country can be called a 'failed state' simply because the international community is not present to declare it so and whether Africans can solve their own problems without interference from international experts and donors?

Shinn, now adjunct professor at the George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, cited Somalia as a case in point. In Africa, where governments are often part of the cause and not the solution to nagging political and economic problems, Somalia is holding its own despite not having a paramount leader or even a central government, he said.

"In many respects," said Shinn, "the Somali business class has replaced political leaders and former government officials as the most important component of the economy" and the 'state.'

He explained, "The private sector provides modern telecommunications services in many parts of the country, taking a technological leap by using satellites and wireless equipment. In those areas where the electric grid, water systems and seaports operate, they are privately run. Schools in Somalia are private or supported by Islamic organizations. The language of instruction is

English or Arabic. Businesspersons support the operation of sharia or Islamic courts in the absence of any governmental judicial system. Even security has become a private matter."

Shinn, who wrote his Master's thesis at George Washington University on the Pan-Somali or Greater Somalia movement, pointed out that "some 14 reconciliation conferences have attempted to bring peace and national unity to Somalia. The most recent unity effort known as the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference commenced 16 months ago in Kenya and is still underway. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) designated the government of Kenya to lead the talks. Under pressure from the international community, the participants did sign a cease fire agreement."

While these negotiations have muddled along, life in Somalia has found a way. One of the key mechanisms for maintaining the economy is the financing provided by the approximately one million Somalis living outside Somalia, many of them in North America, according to Shinn.

"The United Nations estimates that these Somalis now send back to their homeland an estimated \$1 billion annually in the form of remittances," Shinn explained. "This is by far the most significant source of income for Somalia and Somaliland. In this sense, the economy in Somalia and Somaliland has become global as a direct result of the collapse of the former Somali Republic."

According to the diplomat turned scholar, "These trends have the potential to promote positive change in Somalia."

But, he added, if left unchecked, they can also channel their energy in a negative direction. "Fundamentalist groups that support or tolerate external terrorist activity are not in the interest of Somali unity and progress. Businesspersons profiting from the failed state situation may be reluctant to permit the return of a viable national government."

Overall, Shinn cautioned: "It is simply not realistic in today's world for a society to exist over an extended period of time without a national government. Although the private sector has filled some of the void, until there is a widely accepted national leadership there will never be reliable security, reconstruction of basic infrastructure and the equitable delivery of social services."

Therefore, "It is imperative that efforts continue to create some kind of national governing structure in Somalia," Shinn told his audience. "This will require help from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the international community.

"It does not mean, however, there must be a prolongation of the current talks in Kenya or a new conference in some other foreign city," Shinn said. "After fourteen tries at 'top down' conferences outside Somalia, it is time to revisit the 'building block' or 'bottom up' approach. Somaliland and Puntland, in spite of the dispute related to Puntland's claims on part of Somaliland's easternmost regions, have shown that it is possible to achieve a reasonable amount of control and stability."

The international community, on the other hand, "should make clear that it is not interested in supporting another external Somali conference. At the same time, it should provide greater support than it has in the past to local Somali administrations that demonstrate a willingness and ability to become secure and develop economically," Shinn concluded.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF106 02/23/2004

U.S. Deplores Violence in Gambella Region of Ethiopia

(Calls for investigation into charges of attacks against civilians) (240)

The United States urged an end to violence between ethnic Anuaks and the military in the Gambella region of Ethiopia in a statement released February 20. The U.S. also called for an independent investigation into allegations of attacks by the Ethiopian military against civilians in the area.

"Fully transparent and independent investigations by the Government would encourage restoration of peace in the troubled region," the State Department said.

Following is the text of the State Department press release:

Press Statement

Adam Ereli, Deputy Spokesman

Washington, DC

February 20, 2004

Ethiopia: Violence in Gambella Region

The security situation in the Gambella region of western Ethiopia is deteriorating and has resulted in fighting between ethnic Anuaks and the Ethiopian military and Anuaks and other ethnic groups. More than 200 people have died as a result.

The United States deplores this ongoing ethnic violence and calls upon the Government of Ethiopia to conduct transparent, independent inquiries, and particularly into allegations that members of the Ethiopian military committed acts of violence against civilians in Gambella region.

Fully transparent and independent investigations by the Government would encourage restoration of peace in the troubled region. We urge all parties to refrain from further acts of violence and to work together to find

lasting solutions to the root problems that sparked these violent episodes.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

AEF402 02/26/2004

Cape Town Student Astronaut's Essay Wins Mars Mission Assignment

(Nomathemba Kontyo works at Jet Propulsion Lab in California) (820)

By Susan Ellis

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- "Yesterday we worked till 9:30 at night, but anyway we did not even notice the time because we were just enjoying ourselves!" South African student astronaut Nomathemba Kontyo wrote in her daily journal filed from inside Mars Exploration Rover Mission operations in Pasadena, California.

The 15-year-old from Cape Town is one of an international team of 16 students who won essay contests in their countries, enabling them to work directly with scientists and engineers overseeing the science payload on the Mars Exploration Rovers. The project is sponsored by The Planetary Society through a partnership with the LEGO Company, and the scientific experiments take place at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena.

The students are among the first ones to see the images captured by the Rover and sent back from Mars to Earth, and Nomathemba remarked in her journal: "Today we saw an image captured by Opportunity. The image captured by the Microscopic Imager was very interesting. We were also told about the Pancam

instrument by one of the scientists. Each team had to report about how their instruments are doing and what is new."

In order to qualify, Nomathemba, known as "Rara" to friends, had to do a lot more than write an essay. She had to conduct actual experiments dictated by information given her by the scientists in California taken from the Internet, she told a Washington File reporter in Washington in a telephone interview February 26.

"Scientists speculate that there was water on Mars. The information they took from the Internet and they gave it to me and asked me to write about 'How Red Rover will explore Mars.' We were given information about the instruments on the Rover, how they work ... and we were given the measurements and we had to do experiments. I had to use the correct instrument on the Rover in order to explore; some of them can't be used at night. We need the sunlight to charge the batteries.

"It was great and it took me four days to write it! I thought students from England and the United States would win, because I didn't even have a computer for my assignments, so the only thing I could do [was] go to the science center to finish all of those assignments. Every day I had to come because they gave us about two assignments every week so I had to do those and mail them back."

In California, Nomathemba is accompanied by her mother, Nomathamsanqa Kontyo, who told a South African reporter her daughter's winning was "a great blessing from God." They are living in a guesthouse provided by the project.

Nomathemba has made friends with many people, including the two student astronauts from whom she and her co-astronaut Camille Zedan, from England, took over. They are Canadian Kristyn Arodzinyak and Cheng-Tao Chung from Taiwan. "So we exchanged each other's e-mails and we're going to keep in touch, and took some pictures, and some of those are posted on the Internet," she said.

Before leaving her township of Phillippi, Kontyo was presented with a laptop computer by South African President Thabo Mbeki at a ceremony at her school. When she returns at the beginning of March, she will give presentations to her school and to business sponsors of the trip who provided luggage and other necessities. "I promised everyone I'd come back with pictures to show them what I've been doing," Nomathemba said.

Now that she has competed and achieved one goal, Nomathemba has thought of two others: First, she wants to "inspire women around the world" to think beyond their roles of wives and mothers, and to realize "that they can do anything so long as they put effort to it and commit themselves to it. Because if they can dream something then they can obviously do it." She even dreams that "in 2010 or 2015, maybe I'll be the first African woman in space."

She also wants children to realize that science "is fun" and not boring. "That's wrong, you know. But after they know I've gone to America for the science thing, they'll all be excited! I'll ask them to join the astronomy club, which was created in 2001," she said.

It hasn't been all work and no play in the United States, she stresses. On her last day, Sunday (February 29), Nomathemba said excitedly, "we are going to visit Hollywood."

JPL, a division of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California, manages the Mars Exploration Rover project for NASA's Office of Space Science, in Washington. Images from Spirit and additional information about the project, as well as Nomathemba's journal entries, are available on the Web

sites <http://marsrovers.jpl.nasa.gov> and <http://www.redrovergoestomars.org>.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)